

Submitted By: Athens in Motion Commission

Lauren Blais

Phone: (678) 316-4886 Alt. Phone: (561) 379-6495

Email: lauren.blais@accgov.com

Project Type: Bicycle/Pedestrian (bicycle lanes, sidewalks, other bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure, not including Greenway or Rail-to-Trails) related projects - Transportation & Public Works

Previously submitted but not selected: No

Continuation Project: No

Executive Summary: Milledge Avenue, a historic, three-lane corridor, serves as a vital North/South connection for neighborhoods, schools, and UGA. Sidewalks exist but have gaps and are narrow and close to traffic, and there is no bike or micro mobility infrastructure. Though it is a Tier One High Priority route for biking and rolling in the Athens in Motion Plan, Milledge is the only critical corridor without a vision or transportation plan.

This project includes planning for the future maintenance of upgraded sidewalks, bike facilities, and pedestrian safety measures. Proposed enhancements may include but are not limited to: sidewalks, relocation and upgrade of crosswalks, optimization of signal timing and infrastructure adjustments, renovation of pedestrian corner refuges, installation of pedestrian and street lighting, upgrades to traffic signals.

Project Total Cost: \$ 124,516,000

Total Operating Cost: \$ 102,000

Does this Project require the acquisition of any land? Unsure

Project/Program Description: Milledge Avenue is one of Athens' most iconic streets, stretching from Prince Avenue to White Hall Road along a historic ridge. While currently configured as a three-lane road with two lanes for vehicular travel and one for turning, its width has remained unchanged since the streetcar era. Sidewalks exist along much of the corridor until Riverbend Road, but they are narrow and uncomfortably close to fast-moving traffic, leaving pedestrians feeling unsafe. Additionally, Milledge Avenue lacks infrastructure for bicyclists, personal scooters, or other micro mobility modes, despite its importance to surrounding neighborhoods, schools, and the University of Georgia.

Serving as a key connector, Milledge Avenue passes through some of Athens' most walked and biked neighborhoods, including 5 Points, a vibrant hub for local businesses. On the southern end, a large business district with student rentals also suffers from limited pedestrian and bicycle access. Parking challenges in the 5 Points area underscore the need for improved active transportation options. Milledge Avenue also serves as a daily route for students, residents, and families, passing by Clarke Central High School, Barrow Elementary, and UGA's Greek housing. Parents frequently cross the avenue with children, while others attempt to bike, scooter, or roll along this flat but infrastructure-deficient corridor. Although the corridor experiences periods of heavy traffic, widening the road is not a viable option due to the impact it would have on Milledge Avenue's historic character and its role as a walkable neighborhood street.

Milledge Avenue is identified as a Tier One High Priority corridor in the Athens in Motion Bike and Pedestrian Plan. This project will involve developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to enhance safety while

preserving the historic character of Milledge Avenue from Prince Avenue to Riverbend Road. Since the corridor is under the purview of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County Unified Government (ACCGov) will collaborate closely with GDOT to explore opportunities for partnership on this essential project.

Updates to Milledge are vital as Athens-Clarke County prepares for an anticipated population growth of 30,000 residents by 2045, which will increase demand on transportation networks. Ensuring that streets like Milledge Avenue are safe and functional for all users is critical to meeting the community's future needs.

Staff Comments:

1. This Project is similar to Project 34, which includes similar work on Milledge but only from Lumpkin Street to Prince Avenue, and Project 60, which only includes the Five Points Intersecting area. This Project would extend from Riverbend Road, under the Loop 10 to Prince, through Five Points to Prince Avenue. (Significant difference between Project 34 and this project is that Project 34 includes moving electrical service to underground, from poles.)
2. For the majority of the section of Milledge from Prince to Lumpkin Street the pavement width varies between 30-35 feet (Curb to curb). To add bike lanes without widening the curbs would not be possible in many locations, since most lanes are already 10 feet wide. Similarly, the majority of the section between Lumpkin and the Loop only has 25 feet of roadway (Curb to Curb). To add bike lanes on both sides would require road widening.
3. The Project Description notes "...that the widening of Milledge Avenue is not a viable option due to the impact it would have on Milledge's historic character...". At the same time, eliminating the center turn lane on Milledge Avenue is not a realistic option, because it would make emergency response too difficult, especially during peak times, would most likely not be supported by the required traffic studies. Even if the center turn lane could be eliminated along some portions of Milledge, it could not be eliminated that intersections.
4. Milledge Avenue is a GDOT (state) owned roadway and any modifications to lane configuration must be approved by the state. Also, all existing signals will need to be evaluated and dedicated turn lanes may be required adding more cost to the project. If GDOT is not in favor of reducing the roadway to 2 lanes (from 3-lanes), there will be a need to purchase "expensive" ROW.
5. The result of the proposed project is likely to involve significant existing underground utility accommodation work such as relocations of sewer mains, water mains, fire hydrants, gas mains, stormwater, and services. This may also involve securing additional utility easements.
6. There are approximately 117 parcels along both sides of Milledge Avenue between Prince Ave and Lumpkin Street that would likely be impacted in some fashion. There are approximately 105 parcels along both sides of Milledge Avenue between Lumpkin Street and Riverbend Road that would likely be impacted in some fashion. Widening the curb lines will require UGA and CCSD to participate by providing additional Right Way where widening would occur. It is unknown if UGA would be in support of such action.
7. To promote clean energy/sustainability goals, consider adding: All lighting to be dark sky compliant and, when in association with trails/woods/residences, wildlife "friendly" (2700 K or less); If installed, bike racks to include solar/storage charging options; if installed, bench and rest areas to include

solar/storage charging rest areas; Solar/storage/canopy may be included to power needed lights and provide shade/heat mitigation in open concrete areas (ex: rest areas/open areas along path). Where plantings are needed, utilize native species, which are better adapted to the Piedmont region.

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? Athens in Motion Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan (three Tier One high-priority projects along Milledge)

How is this Project included in the Madison Athens-Clarke County Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) long-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)?

MACORTS 2050: MTP# SP-26: Five Points Intersection Safety Improvements (Clarke) Safety enhancement at the Five Points Intersection. Proposed enhancements may include but are not limited to: sidewalks, relocation and upgrade of crosswalks, optimization of signal timing and infrastructure adjustments, renovation of pedestrian corner refuges, installation of pedestrian and street lighting, upgrades to traffic signals. PE, ROW, UTL & CST MTP Funded (2028 - 2050)

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

How will the Project meet the stated Program Goals in the Mayor & Commission Strategic Plan to provide long-term, ongoing contributions to the Sustainable Transportation needs of the Athens-Clarke County?

Goal Area 1; Section D: Drive community transformation with a focus on creating spaces that are respectful and welcoming: Milledge Avenue is Athens' "Main Street". Improvements will aim to create an inclusive, accessible corridor for all, addressing safety for walking, biking, and rolling. By enhancing walkability and introducing micromobility facilities, the project respects Milledge's historic significance and aims to enhance local business by fostering an inviting environment that meets the mobility needs of diverse residents and visitors.

Goal Area 1; Section E: Support & promote healthy lifestyle: moving, eating, forming healthy relationships, physical and psychological care: Improving Milledge Avenue will make active transportation safer and more accessible, promoting community engagement, physical activity and a healthier lifestyle. Safe pathways for pedestrians, cyclists, and micromobility users encourage active commuting, reducing the need for vehicle trips and improving community wellness for people of all ages.

Goal Area 5; Section A: Improve, expand, and maintain sidewalks, shared-use paths, and bike facilities to provide greater opportunities for residents to use active transportation safely: As a critical corridor, Milledge Avenue's upgrades could expand sidewalk widths, add bike infrastructure, enhance the visual appeal of this important corridor, and create safer access for all active transportation users. Any changes should address key transportation needs identified in the Athens in Motion Plan and will accommodate the county's anticipated growth by providing safe active transportation options.

Goal Area 5; Section B: Pursue inter-city travel options to connect Athens with other cities: While not directly facilitating inter-city travel, Milledge Avenue's improvements support Athens as a destination by connecting vital neighborhoods, schools, and UGA. Its alignment with the Athens in Motion Plan strengthens a countywide network that complements regional and statewide transportation initiatives. Safe access to Riverbend Rd. will create a significant connection to the Greenway and Firefly Trails after MUP is installed along Riverbend Rd. This will lead to a safe route from Milledge

Goal Area 5; Section C: Expand multi-modal Transit access to reduce auto dependency and provide greater mobility for Athens residents: Expanding safe, multimodal options along Milledge Avenue helps reduce auto dependency and supports existing transit services. By creating a more walkable, bike-friendly corridor that connects neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces, Milledge Avenue encourages sustainable commuting choices and access to transit, enhancing mobility for all. This will reduce traffic on Milledge Ave as well as the UGA campus.

Goal Area 5; Section D: Create more usable and aesthetically pleasing corridor connections between residential and commercial areas: Milledge Avenue enhancements have the potential to beautify and improve functionality, creating a more connected and pleasant corridor between residential areas, schools,

and nearby commercial hubs. The focus on preserving historic character while improving walkability and safety will create a more usable, attractive route for all. The improved access to people using active transportation will provide new opportunities for local business.

Goal Area 5; Section E: Enhance safety for all modes of transportation: The Milledge Avenue project prioritizes safety for all transportation modes, introducing dedicated spaces for people walking, biking, and using micromobility. By addressing current safety concerns with sidewalks and the absence of bike and micromobility facilities, the project will reduce traffic conflicts and promote a safe, multimodal corridor. This will improve active transportation as well as vehicular traffic.

Goal Area 6; Section A: Develop well-planned new infrastructure according to future land use values and framework: Milledge Avenue improvements are designed with Athens' future in mind, balancing historic preservation with modern infrastructure and local business needs. The project aligns with the Athens in Motion Plan's vision for sustainable growth, enhancing mobility in a way that meets long-term active transportation needs as the county grows. Vibrant community and business districts have safe facilities for active transportation.

Goal Area 6; Section B: Ensure equitable access to infrastructure to enhance safety and identity: The project addresses equitable access by providing safe, inclusive infrastructure for all users, particularly underserved residents who rely on active and/or public transportation. Enhanced walkways and new bike infrastructure will ensure Milledge Avenue is accessible, safe, and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities. Disabled residents who rely on wheel chairs will be able to use and enjoy the improved Milledge Avenue corridor.

Goal Area 6; Section C: Provide adequate funding for maintenance of existing and newly constructed infrastructure: Funding for this project includes planning for the future maintenance of upgraded sidewalks, bike facilities, and pedestrian safety measures. By ensuring a long-term maintenance plan, the project will create sustainable infrastructure that serves current and future residents reliably and equitably.

Goal Area 6; Section D: Follow through on commitment to 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution: Improvements to Milledge Avenue support active, carbon-free transportation modes like walking and biking, which align with Athens' 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution. By promoting sustainable transportation, this project contributes to lowering vehicle emissions and supports a cleaner, healthier Athens.

Goal Area 6; Section E: Address ecosystem health, infrastructure sustainability, and resilience: The project has the potential to emphasize sustainable design, ensuring upgrades to sidewalks and bike paths that reduce traffic congestion, enhance stormwater management, and improve urban resilience. By prioritizing infrastructure that supports ecosystem health, this project helps build a greener, more resilient community. An improved Milledge Avenue corridor will enable new residents to enjoy the benefits of active transportation.

Project Costs

Detailed project capital budget costs (to be funded from TSPLOST 2026 only):

Project Costs (round to thousand)	Amount
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:	\$ 6,400,000
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 14,028,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 7,014,000
4. Construction:	\$ 70,138,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 7,014,000
6. Testing:	\$ 1,500,000
7. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 4,244,000
8. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 11,034,000
9. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 702,000
10. Other 1:	\$
11. Other 2:	\$
Project Subtotal:	\$ 122,074,000
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 2,442,000
TSPLOST 2026 Project Total:	\$ 124,516,000

Staff Comments on the Estimate:

1. For comparison purposes the re-imagine North Avenue project was estimated at a construction cost of \$17.5 million for a section that is a little more than 4,300 linear feet, not including contingencies. The intent of the two projects is very similar, i.e. goal of adding multi-use path on both sides of the street. Using that engineering estimate equates to a construction cost of ~ \$70 million and a total cost of \$124,516,000 for this project. Of that total ~\$50.5 million would be for the same scope as other Milledge Avenue Improvements Project 34 and ~\$10 million would be for Project 60 - Five Points Intersection Improvements.
2. (This pricing assumes that Georgia Power would be willing to participate significantly in the cost of burying the electrical utilities as part of their on-going grants program.) The significant comparison difference between the two projects is that North Avenue project is doing work within the existing ROW and for Milledge Avenue would predominately require additional ROW on both sides of the road.
3. ROW required would impact for potential 221 parcels, approximately total 16 acres, at an average rate of \$400,000/acre. This is significantly lower than recent appraisals but lower average rates could be realized with some combination of additional ROW and potential lane reductions.

Operating Cost

Total Annual Net Operating Costs when Project is complete:

Only identify additional or net operating costs to be paid by ACCGov as a result of this Project. Identify the additional or net costs needed, above ACCGov's current operating budget, to operate the requested project; as well as any additional Project related revenues that would be generated. Provide budget costs for each identified category below.

Operating Costs (round to thousand)	Estimated Impact for Annual Operating Expenditures
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT	
PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	
1. Personnel Costs: from Appendix A	
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	
• Water:	
3. Operating Supplies:	
4. Equipment Maintenance:	
5. Facility Maintenance:	
6. Other: Public Art Maintenance	4,000
7. Other: Annual Maintenance	35,000
8. Other: Life Cycle Replacement	63,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	\$ 102,000

Project Financing

Is the proposed Project to receive funding from source(s) other than TSPLOST 2026? No